

# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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No. 1

## The Life and Work of Jacob N. Brubacher 1838—1913

Ira D. Landis

Jacob N. Brubacher was a whole-souled pastor, a consecrated bishop, a Biblical disciplinarian, a wise counsellor, a gifted defender of the faith. He was a member of the Lancaster bishop board during the reconstruction period following the Civil War, served as conference moderator for over thirty years, and was a leader in Lancaster conference for many more of his nearly fifty years of conference membership. In the transition period through which he served the church he was a prime mover in many lines of activity. During his life the church changed from German preaching to English; from just a few church activities to Sunday schools, evangelistic meetings, and an aggressive missionary movement; from a small flock of married folks only, to a larger group which included vast numbers of teen-age young people; and from a few services in a few small meetinghouses to many more services in many more and larger buildings.

The first Brubacher known in Mennonite history was Hans Brubacher, a Swiss Brethren martyr of the year 1530, who came from Zumikon in the Canton of Zurich.

Jacob N. Brubacher, the subject of this sketch, in his book, *The Brubacher Genealogy in America*, Elkhart, Ind., 1884, traces his ancestry back to the immigrant John (Hans) Brubacher who purchased land in Lancaster County, Pa., in 1717. Jacob N. Brubacher was also a descendant of Christian Eby, deacon at Hammer Creek, and Samuel Nissley, bishop at Erisman's. On July 25, 1838 in the home of Sem and Magdalena Nissley Brubacher, on the homestead along the Lancaster pike east of Mount Joy, Jacob N. Brubacher was born and always lived. A self-educated man he grew up with a love for farming, nature, the Bible and the simple life of his ancestors. When nineteen years of age (Nov. 1, 1857) he was married to Barbara H. Stauffer. Five children blessed this happy home: Fanny, Martin, David, Magdalena and Sem. Only Sem survives at this writing.

While drafted during the Civil War J. N. Brubacher contracted a severe attack of typhoid fever. Although his condition was considered hopeless and he



**JACOB N. BRUBACHER, 1838-1913**  
A photograph taken in Ontario in the year 1910 by D. B. Betzner.

himself testified that he saw angels coming for him, he nevertheless recovered. After recovering he conducted with the cithern (a lute-like musical instrument, strung with wire and played with a quill or plectrum) a singing school in his home.

In 1863 Jacob made a business trip to Philadelphia and was obliged to spend Sunday in the city. That Sunday he visited an Episcopal Sunday school and was deeply and favorably impressed. In June of that same year he himself, at the age of 25, opened a Sunday school in the Pike schoolhouse on the border of his farm, where he had earlier been both a pupil and teacher. Young Brubacher divided his Sunday school into primary, intermediate and "A" classes. He taught the Bible, German, reading, music, and penmanship. Among the families which supported him were Freys, Stolls, Erbs, Ebys, Longs, Hoffmans, Hersheys and Jacob Newcomers. But this being the first Sunday school in the conference, he was marked for excommunication. He invited Bishop John Brubaker to visit the school.

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## The Church Service of the Mennonites of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

A. Martin Wenger

Having been born in 1884, the writer remembers the days of transition from the German language to the English as well as various changes in the forms of worship on the part of the Lancaster county Mennonites. This article will deal particularly with the Weaverland congregation, where the writer was baptized and where his parents were members before him. Needless to say, therefore, going back to Weaverland will always be going home.

The Weaverland meetinghouse of 1883, like its predecessors, was quite plain. As the writer remembers, there was no pulpit in the building until late in the nineteenth century. But standing on the floor about the middle of the north side of the auditorium was the "preachers' bench," and before it stood a table, the end of which faced the bench. On the table the church Bibles were kept. On either side of the table was a bench on which the men sat who led the singing. To the right and left of the preachers sat the women and men respectively, facing each other. About the middle of the building an aisle extended east and west for the entire length of the auditorium. Beyond this aisle the benches faced north, being occupied by the young men and boys (east side) and young women and girls (west side). Around the outside walls on the "men's side" were hooks on which overcoats and hats were placed. There were also pin rails suspended from the ceiling on which hats could be hung. The benches were unpainted and had one board about six inches wide which served as a back rest. These simple benches were quite comfortable. Since the preachers' bench was not on an elevated platform, the floor south of the long aisle was gradually elevated to enable those in the rear of the building to hear and see the preachers better. At the west end of the church building were two anterooms. The larger of these was for the women. They kept their bonnets and shawls there during the service, and there mothers resorted with the small children who became troublesome in the meeting. The smaller anteroom in the northwest corner of the building was for the use of the ministerial



body. There the preachers and deacons met preceding each service. Members desiring to bring any matter before the preachers could do so in this room before services. It was also in this anteroom that applicants for church membership made known their desire, and in the same room they received instruction prior to baptism. The writer well remembers going into this room for a number of Sundays in 1899 with a class of applicants and receiving very good instruction from the old book, *Conversation on Saving Faith for the Young*, by Bishop Gerhard Roosen, 1612-1711, of Altona, near Hamburg, Germany. The book was an English translation, but much of the oral teaching of the Weaverland ministry was given in the Pennsylvania German language. Several members of that class were also received into the church in German, but for most of us the English language was used.

In those days no exact time was set for the beginning of the service. When the song leaders thought enough people were present, one of them would announce a hymn and start singing. Both the chorister and the congregation remained seated. After a few hymns had been sung, the preachers and deacons would enter the auditorium and take their place on the preachers' bench. When the singing had ceased, the ministers took charge of the service. The order of service was then as follows: 1. Opening remarks by a preacher (in former years a short sermon was preached, but without a text). 2. Silent prayer, with everyone kneeling. 3. After the congregation had again been seated, the deacon arose and read a Scripture lesson. The Scripture lesson varied in length from several verses to a whole chapter, and was selected by the minister who was to preach the sermon. 4. The sermon then followed and consisted of a discourse on the Scripture lesson which had been read. The sermon was often somewhat longer than those of today. It closed with the words, "Further liberty." 5. All the ministers and deacons, while remaining seated, then gave "testimony," expressing their approval of the sermon and frequently adding a few remarks of their own. 6. The one who had preached then arose, expressed appreciation for the testimonies, approved of the additional remarks which had been made, sometimes added a few more remarks himself, and called the congregation to prayer (all kneeling). This prayer was generally led by the one who had preached, but sometimes he called on another minister for the prayer. 7. The congregation again being seated, the minister either selected a hymn or asked the choristers to do so. 8. If the one who preached was a visitor, one of the home ministers then arose and "introduced" him, as well as any other visiting ministers or deacons, and made any other necessary announcements. 9. The one who had preached then arose, asked the congregation to arise, and pronounced the benediction.

From his father, the writer learned that in earlier years the congregation had risen

after the closing prayer and remained standing with their backs to the preachers while the benediction was pronounced. Then all were seated for the closing hymn. Thus there was no singing from the time the ministry took charge of the service until after the benediction had been pronounced. (Is this reminiscent of the days of persecution in Switzerland?)

In his sermon the minister often called special attention to one or more verses of the Scripture lesson. This led gradually to the selection of a definite "text" for the sermon.

When Sunday school, originally a Sunday afternoon service, began to be held in the forenoon, a definite time to start services was established.

Prior to 1890, there was little English in the Weaverland services; and by 1910 little German was used. During this period of transition, the opening remarks were frequently in one language and the sermon in the other. It was also not unusual for the same sermon to be partly in English and partly in German.

Today the old customs are being modified somewhat: The chorister now rises to lead in singing; only audible prayer is found in the evening services, and no testimonies are given in the evening services. (Indeed, some districts have discontinued testimonies altogether).

The following Scriptures are used for special occasions: Matthew 18 is read at council meeting; Matthew 6 is read at preparatory services; and Luke 22 is read at the semiannual communion service. Much of the communion sermon is based on types and figures from Creation to Christ. (Again on this point there is some variation from district to district. Some follow Old Testament types and figures only to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.) Let us take heed that as we become more modern, we do not lose the love, faith, devotion, spirituality, simplicity of life, and nonconformity and nonresistance of our fathers.

### JACOB N. BRUBACHER

(Continued from first page)

The bishop was so impressed that "he for one would not oppose it," and the work continued.

On June 15, 1865 J. N. Brubacher was called to the ministry at Landisville, when his Sunday school had just started its third summer. Almost at once he was led of the Lord to close the school. On Dec. 26, 1867, when but 29 years of age, he was ordained bishop of one of the largest districts of the conference, at Erisman's. The bishop board thus included a Sunday school promoter. Assisted by Amos Herr, Bishop Brubacher succeeded in having the spring conference of 1871 make Sunday schools permissible throughout the conference district.

Seven more years transpired before he opened a Sunday school at Landisville, and even then a local doctor told him that he wasn't fit to give communion for thirty years. Jacob replied, "I didn't know it was that bad." Several years

later this physician was such an enthusiastic Sunday-school supporter that he gave each pupil a small Testament.

Jacob's deep knowledge of the Bible, his teaching experience, and fifteen years in the ministry were an asset when he, John F. Funk, Isaac Eby, Benjamin Herr and his brother Amos met in Amos Herr's home in the spring of 1880 to prepare literature for the new Sunday school movement. The primary and intermediate question books (in English) which they prepared were used for more than a decade. At last the vision of J. N. Brubacher had been more than realized, but even he could not have envisioned the subsequent blessings of the Sunday-school movement.

When J. N. Brubacher was first ordained, the bishop of the district was John Brubaker; the other ministers were Peter K. Nissley, Christian Nissley, David Brubaker, Henry Shenk, Peter Risser, Samuel Hershey, Christian Becker, and John B. Landis. The deacons were John Nissley, Christian Newcomer, Samuel Lehman, and Jacob Harnish. With these brethren and their successors J. N. Brubacher labored faithfully, appreciating their ministry and counsel. When church members came to him for counsel he would ask for time to counsel with the ministry of the congregation concerned.

When Brubacher was chosen bishop the following constituted the Lancaster conference bishop board: Peter Ebersole, George Weaver, Jacob S. Graybill, Benjamin Herr, Christian Bomberger II, Jacob Doner, John Brubaker, Nathaniel Shope and Joseph Burkholder. From the first he was considered a pillar on the bishop board and possibly as early as 1881, at the age of 43, he was their moderator.

Even though Brubacher loved the German language he early saw the need of English preaching. As was often the case, Amos Herr was again his wise counsellor. Already in 1878 Brubacher tried to introduce English preaching at Erisman's congregation but was turned down by a congregational vote of 30 to 28. As in introducing Sunday schools he waited upon the Lord.

In the nineteenth century the Lancaster conference felt responsible for the Mennonite settlements in central and western Pennsylvania, and also had a concern for those in Virginia and Canada. An evangelizing committee of two was appointed annually until almost 1900. J. N. Brubacher was called upon for the follow-up work. In 1873, for example, he, assisted by Nathaniel Shope and John D. Overholt, ordained J. N. Durr at Masontown as bishop under the supervision of Lancaster Conference. In September, 1876, J. N. Brubacher and Benjamin Herr helped organize the Southwestern Pennsylvania Conference.

The failure of John Hunsicker's health caused Brubacher to be given the bishop oversight of the Franklin county churches. This oversight he exercised for 19 years. Besides this additional work there were church difficulties. In less than six years

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## NEWS & NOTES

The *Gospel Herald*, August 15, 1940, contains an article on the history of Mennonite Sunday schools in Indiana, written by John F. Funk in 1925, when he was about ninety years of age.

Robert Friedmann, formerly a teacher in the schools of Vienna, Austria, and now living in Goshen, Indiana, has spent many years in a study of Anabaptist and Mennonite history. Part of the fruit of his studies is found in his article, "Anabaptism and Pietism," which was published in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, issues of April and July, 1940.

Jacob M. Landis of Souderton, Pennsylvania, steward of Eastern Mennonite Home, gives the history of the Home in his article in the *Gospel Herald*, September 5, 1940.

Attorney Ernest O. Kooser of Somerset Pennsylvania, recently published a 10-page pamphlet entitled, *The Mennonites*.

Landis H. Brubaker of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, writes an extended series of articles, "Wandering in Martyrs' Mirror," for *The Youth's Christian Companion*, beginning with the issue of October 6, 1940.

The *Christian Monitor*, September 1940, contains an article with interesting data pertaining to the Mennonites of the United States. The facts and figures of the article were taken from a report compiled by the U. S. Census Bureau.

The *Gospel Herald* for May 9, 1940, contains an article by John Horsch on "The So-Called Half-Anabaptists."

Edward Yoder's article, "Distinguishing Doctrines of the Mennonite Church," appeared in the October, 1940, issue of the *Christian Monitor*.

In the *Gospel Herald*, February 22, 1940, John Horsch writes on "The Teaching of the Early Mennonite Church on the Doctrine of the Trinity of God." The May 16, 1940, issue of the *Herald* contains a similar article on the oath and nonconformity to the world.

John L. Horst introduced recently a book-review section to the readers of the *Christian Monitor* of which he is the editor. The October, 1940, issue contains reviews of eight books and booklets.

In the *Gospel Herald*, issue of July 27, 1939 (p. 362), John Horsch presents an interesting article on "Prayer for the Sick Among the Swiss Brethren of Former Centuries."

The question of Adam Pastor's theological liberalism and his secession from

the Mennonite Church in the days of Menno Simons is discussed by John Horsch in the *Gospel Herald*, issue of March 14, 1940.

The periodical *Church History* for December, 1940, contains an article by Robert Friedmann entitled "Conception of the Anabaptists." Earlier issues of the same journal contained articles by H. S. Bender on Conrad Grebel (June, 1938), by G. F. Hershberger on "Pacifism and the State in Colonial Pennsylvania" (March, 1939), and by J. C. Wenger on Pilgram Marpeck (March, 1940).

Anna May Garber writes an interesting article about her father, the late A. D. Wenger in the January 19, 1941, *The Youth's Christian Companion*.

"Predestination" is the title of an article by John Horsch appearing in the February, 1941, *Christian Monitor*.

Volume One of the forthcoming Mennonite history, written by John Horsch and treating on Mennonites in Europe is being prepared for publication. H. S. Bender is writing Volume Two which deals with American Mennonite history.

*The Youth's Christian Companion*, issue of March 23, 1941, contains an interesting article by Robert M. Friedmann, "Old Books and Their Effect."

The Mennonite Publishing House recently issued a new edition of *Conversation on Saving Faith for the Young*. This little book has an interesting history. The author is Gerhard Roosen (1612-1711), a leading Mennonite elder of northwestern Germany in his time. The German original had the title, *Christliches Gemüths-Gespräch*. How many editions of it were published in Europe is unknown. In America it was first issued from the press of the Ephrata Society in 1769, and was re-issued ten times in German from 1770 to 1873 at various places in United States and Canada. The first English edition was prepared by a committee of Mennonites in Ontario and issued by John Baer and Sons, Lancaster, in 1857. The latest edition at Scottdale is the sixth English edition. The book is still in demand and is used by some of the more conservative Mennonite groups.

A new book of historical interest has just come from the press with the appearance of *Ohio Mennonite Sunday Schools*, by John Umble.

Historical anniversaries have recently been observed by several congregations in western Pennsylvania. In July, 1940, at Springs, Somerset County, the sesquicentennial anniversary of the first Mennonite activity in the Casselman River Valley was celebrated with public historical programs. In November, 1940, at Scottdale the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the coming of Mennonites into Jacob's Creek Valley, Fayette and Westmoreland

## QUESTION BOX

In his *Life of Peter S. Hartman*, Harry A. Brunk of Harrisonburg, Virginia, mentions that in past years it was customary for the Virginia Mennonite laity to vote on the Conference resolutions (p. 10). Do readers know of other conferences where this was formerly the practice?

Does any reader know of any earlier reference to the Franklin County (Pa.) and Washington County (Md.) Conference than the familiar statement that in 1844 the Pennsylvania ministers were organized in three "circuits"? (Hartzler and Kauffman: *Mennonite Church History*, 1905, p. 173.)

The editor would like to get in touch with someone who has done research in the genealogy of the Sensenig family of Lancaster County, Pa.

What is the earliest known reference in Mennonite literature to the so-called "Seven Ordinances" of the church?

What names would readers suggest for lists of outstanding leaders in the Indiana-Michigan and Eastern Amish Mennonite conferences, comparable to the Western District A. M. leaders of whom Melvin Gingerich wrote in the Oct., 1940, BULLETIN?

Are the Mennonites of Ontario composed almost exclusively of Franconia and Lancaster families who emigrated to Canada a century or more ago? Or was there direct immigration of European Mennonites to Ontario during the nineteenth century as there was to the United States?

Where can one find ship-lists of passengers who entered the United States during the nineteenth century?

Was it ever the practice for Mennonite preachers to take texts from the Old Testament apocryphal books?

Has anyone ever written the story of the activity of the Pennsylvania Mennonites in caring for Russian Mennonite immigrants in the 1880's when they spent their first winter as guests of their American brethren?

counties, was observed with special programs.

"Utopia in Pennsylvania: The Amish," is an article by A. J. Nock in *The Atlantic* for April, 1941. This writer as an outsider gives an appreciative interpretation of the cultural and economic life of a group which is today gaining increased recognition for its agricultural achievements in a time when government efforts are made to keep farmers from starving.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Rosanna of the Amish.* By JOSEPH W. YODER. Published by the Yoder Publishing Company, Huntingdon, Pa. 1940. pp. xii, 319. Illustrated. \$2.00.

Readers of Ruth Lininger Dobson's *Straw in the Wind* and similar misrepresentations of plain people have felt the need of a book that would tell the truth about the Amish with reverence and sympathy. Joseph W. Yoder's *Rosanna of the Amish* is such a book. In it he tells the interesting story of how his mother, an Irish Catholic orphan, Rosanna McGonegal, became a member of the Amish church and the happy mother of an Amish family. He knows the Amish life and character and writes of his Amish friends and relatives with sympathetic understanding. Mrs. Dobson, on the other hand, either did not understand the Amish, or sacrificed truth for what she conceived to be art.

*Rosanna of the Amish* is not a novel. And it is more than the biography of the orphan who became the wife of Little Crist Yoder and a faithful member of the Amish Church. It might be called a handbook of Amish life and culture. Whenever, in the course of his narrative, the author reaches an event in the life of Rosanna such as attending Amish services or joining church or her courtship or marriage, he pauses to describe in detail any special Amish customs connected with it.

In this way he introduces worth while descriptions of the Amish church service, baptism, communion, marriage, burial, a play party, a corn husking, several courtships, a wedding—including the marriage proposal by the deacon, wedding invitations delivered in person by the groom, the wedding feast—and many others. But the book is valuable also for its accurate portrayal of the Amish character and its evaluation of the virtues of this misunderstood people. The author presents the Amish as a model of Christian sobriety, industry, energy, and kindness, but pictures also their happiness and contentment.

The drawings by George Daubenspeck, with their correct portrayal of Pennsylvania landscape, Amish farm homes, Amish dress, and even Amish character and attitudes, contribute to the literary and artistic value of the book.

—John Umble.

## JACOB N. BRUBACHER

(Continued from page 2)

(1887-1893) four Lancaster conference bishops were silenced, reducing the bishop board to six members. One of the four bishops who was silenced organized the Martinite faction in 1893.

In the spring conference of 1894 the Lancaster bishops were opposed to protracted (evangelistic) meetings and conference sustained them by a vote of 57 to 11. In the fall of 1895 the vote was even. But following the work in Juniata county and at Elizabethtown, Brubacher turned favorable. In 1909 he had revival meetings at Mount Joy; he was then past seventy. He was also opposed to the Sunday School Mission Meeting for many years but just before his death he invited them to Mount Joy.

A few illustrations will indicate Brubacher's attitudes and capacity for quick thought. One time a group of school directors, with Mennonites in their number, met him. He defended his position as follows: "We have a compulsory school law. This make the director a truant officer. Further, if the child is not vaccinated, you must send him home. This is inconsistent."

On another occasion a similar group of bank directors came to his home. To them he replied: "You had a council of war before you came. You convicted me without a trial. Further, if things go good, it is no honor to be a bank director; if they don't you may ruin your family. Get out of it."

Some folks who opposed the use of telephones called the instrument a "hell-box." His answer was an illustration: "Suppose my child at midnight is seriously ill. I call the doctor and he saves the life of the child. Would you say that two devils talked together?"

An obstinate sister in the church once asked him whether he would give her communion without a cap (prayer veiling). "Yes, if you take your apron to cover your head!" "I am too ashamed," she retorted. "Then wear a cap. A hat with feathers will not do."

When asked to dedicate the old people's home at Oreville, Pa., he told one of the building committee that he would do so under one condition: "It must be paid for, before I will give it to the Lord and His church." He did wait until it was paid for, and it has been self-supporting ever since.

In explaining the meaning of the phrase, "Be ye angry and sin not," he referred to an experience he had one time in the Harrisburg (Pa.) railroad station. Two loud mouthed roughs entered and aroused his anger. "I was angry; but if I had hit them, I had sinned."

A book agent was one time trying to sell him an atlas and was being refused. "You can't take your money along to heaven," snarled the agent. "Nor your atlas," replied Brubacher.

An immersionist was going to prove from the Greek the meaning of *baptizo*. Brubacher called in Dr. Z., a Greek scholar. Dr. Z. handed the immersionist a copy of the Ten Commandments in Greek. This the immersionist could not read. That settled the controversy.

J. N. Brubacher is still quoted frequently. Here are some of his oft-quoted sayings: "*E pluribus unum*: I am only one among many." "In discipline, be mild

but firm." "We should be careful what we say, but not allow ourselves to be intimidated." "Do your duty without fear or favor." "Nip it in the bud." "It is sad if other bishops don't carry out the discipline, but this does not excuse me." "Don't carry water on two shoulders." "When you go to make peace, don't take a dog or cane along." "Don't disregard the Old Testament, but study the New until you know it as well as the A B C's." "Teach your child to work; it is the best education you can give him." "You cannot go to heaven with another man's money in your pocket: pay your honest debts." "You cannot prevent birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests on it." "The teaching of our Saviour was always in harmony with His life and example."

The spiritual power of Jacob N. Brubacher was due to a consistent prayer life and daily meditation on the Word of God. His diaries and "Daily Food" books carry continuously a Bible verse and words of praise. Brubacher's services were always desired and his counsel was followed closely. As a disciplinarian he has no peers in the church of his choice.

On October 9, 1913, at the age of 75, he laid his armor by, revered even more in death than he was in life. When his body was interred at Landisville (October 13) many thanked God for Jacob N. Brubacher and prayed for many more like him.

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## John Horsch 1867-1941 Pioneer Mennonite Historian

Harold S. Bender

John Horsch was born December 18, 1867, at Giebelstadt, Bavaria, Germany, and died at his home in Scottsdale, Pa., on Tuesday morning, October 7, 1941, after a lingering illness, at the age of 73 years, 9 months and 20 days. He was born the son of Bishop Jacob Horsch of Giebelstadt. His grandfather Horsch had also been a minister and bishop in the Mennonite Church. His mother was Barbara Landes Horsch.

His father moved to Gelchsheim, Bavaria, in 1871, but continued to serve the congregation at Giebelstadt. John attended public school at Gelchsheim from 1874 to 1882. From 1882 to 1884 he assisted his father on the farm. From 1884 to 1886 he attended the Bavarian State Agricultural School and graduated from that institution.

Early in life he took a great interest in the history of the Mennonite Church. At the age of 15 he learned of Dr. Ludwig Keller, a noted Anabaptist historian at Münster, and immediately began a correspondence with Dr. Keller on historical matters which continued for more than five years. A number of these letters have been preserved and are worthy of publication. Much of his thorough knowledge of the details of the history of the Anabaptists was acquired by intensive study far into the night after the day's work on the farm was completed.

His thorough belief in the Mennonite doctrine of nonresistance led him to leave his home in Germany and come to this country rather than to take up compulsory military training. He crossed the ocean on a Dutch ship, spent his twentieth birthday at sea, and landed in New York, January 3, 1888.

At his parental home he had become acquainted with the "Herold der Wahrheit" which was published at Elkhart, Indiana, by the Mennonite Publishing Company. He accordingly decided to go there to try to find work at that publishing house under John F. Funk. However, Funk had no opening for him early in 1888, and so he went to Halstead, Kansas, where his cousin, also named John Horsch, was employed on a farm. During that winter he attended the Indian Mission School at Halstead and learned the English language. Since



JOHN HORSCH  
A Picture Taken in 1922

his ambition was to get into Christian publication work, he kept in touch with Brother Funk at Elkhart and in May, 1888, the latter asked him to come to Elkhart to work as assistant editor and German proof-reader at the publishing house, which he did. He joined the Mennonite congregation at Elkhart shortly thereafter, transferring from the Giebelstadt (Germany) Mennonite Church, where he had been baptized in 1882 at the age of 15.

During the years 1888 to 1892 he attended various colleges but worked for the publishing company at Elkhart during the summer months. Among the schools attended were the University of Wisconsin and Baldwin-Wallace College at Berea, Ohio. He spent a total of approximately two years in college. He continued his editorial work with the "Herold der Wahrheit" for some time.

On September 26, 1893, at Elkhart, Indiana, he married Christine Funk of Schloss Neipperg, Württemberg, Germany. John F. Funk officiated at the ceremony. To this union were born four children: Elizabeth, Walter, Menno, and Paul. His passing is the first break in this family circle.

In 1899 he entered the employ of the Light and Hope Publishing Company, and

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## Brief Appreciation of John Horsch As A Historian

Edward Yoder

With the recent passing of John Horsch the Mennonite Church in America has lost a pioneer in the study and writing of Mennonite history. Mennonite history was the major interest of Brother Horsch's life. The importance of his contributions to the furtherance of Mennonite historical study has been widely acknowledged by both Mennonite and non-Mennonite historians, both in America and in Europe.

For centuries it was the case that the early history of Anabaptists and Mennonites was largely written by their enemies and opponents. As one might expect under such circumstances, the information given to the world about them was partial, prejudiced, unfair, and frequently false. It is only in comparatively recent times that impartial historians and Mennonites themselves have investigated the original sources of their history and have begun to construct the correct picture of early Mennonite history and faith. To this task John Horsch devoted a large part of his life and to its accomplishment he has made lasting and significant contributions.

Brother Horsch was qualified to make this contribution because he held to the historic position of the Mennonite faith from personal conviction. As a young man of twenty years he left home and native land and came to America in order that he might escape compulsory military service, against which he had a conscience based on the Scriptures as embodied in the faith of his church.

His long life was spent in investigating the history and doctrines of the early Anabaptists and Mennonites. During more than fifty years he searched through perhaps thousands of second-hand books lists, and succeeded in collecting many valuable books and documents pertaining to the early history of our church. He was gifted for carrying on painstaking and exhaustive studies of historical details. He obtained access to many primary sources of information on Mennonite beginnings in Switzerland and in Holland. He was able to use some valuable historical materials which had never before been studied by a Mennonite historian, materials in the form of protocols, mandates, secretaries' reports of the public debates between the

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# Helps in History Research

Melvin Gingerich

If the local history of our Mennonite congregations is to be written, it will not be done entirely by our trained historians. Many communities do not have men who have had formal training in historical research but most churches have members who are interested in local and congregational history. These individuals, recognizing their ignorance of historical method, often are reluctant to undertake a task which they really should perform. It is the purpose of this article to give a few hints on historical method, which these amateur historians can use successfully.

Usually the first question raised is, "Where are materials to be found?" The county courthouse has many valuable records. The land transfer records show when and where the first members of the church community purchased land. In case they lived there before buying land, old tax records may be filed away, showing in what year they first paid taxes and where they lived when they paid them. Petitions for local and county roads often are followed by the names of the early settlers of given communities. The county register of marriage licenses is an accurate source of information, giving not only the names of the contracting parties but also the minister who had charge of the marriage ceremony. In some cases there are given lists of ministers having the legal right to officiate at marriage ceremonies. When lands are set aside to be used for church or burial grounds, county records give the details of these transactions. Wills on file in courthouses give not only information on family history but also facts on the economic status of early families.

In many counties local histories have been written, usually in the form of county histories. Too often these books were written hastily and many errors crept in. They do, however, serve as excellent guides, and many hints are given which may be substantiated by other records. The biographical sections of these histories often contain brief sketches of influential Mennonite church leaders and laymen. In many instances the earliest county histories have long been out of print and few copies are available. The libraries of state historical societies or of the historical departments of state governments should, therefore, be consulted for these old and rare volumes. Files of old newspapers in newspaper plants or in state historical libraries should be examined for pertinent materials. These libraries, too, usually have complete sets of early county atlases, which contain township maps listing land owners.

Much information can be found by examining the tombstones in old cemeteries. In some states, patriotic or historical societies have made complete records of the information on the tombstones found in old cemeteries. Copies of these records

## PIONEER MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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became associated with J. A. Sprunger for a period of nine years, first at Berne, Indiana, later at Cleveland and Birmingham, Ohio.

Early in 1908 M. S. Steiner visited Brother Horsch and as a result of this visit he was invited by Aaron Loucks to join the editorial staff at the newly established Mennonite Publishing House at Scottsdale. This offer was gladly accepted, and in May, 1908, he started his work on the German publications there. He remained in the active employ of the Publishing House until the spring of 1940, when the pressure of his active life became too great and made it necessary to relinquish some of his work just at the time when he was completing the book on European Mennonite Church History, the writing of which had been assigned to him by the Mennonite General Conference.

John Horsch was considered the best authority in the Mennonite Church on various phases of our church history. In Elkhart he built up, before 1895, what at that time was the most complete library on Mennonite History in America. When he came to Scottsdale, the Publishing House management authorized him to continue his library work along with his other duties, and he assembled and catalogued at Scottsdale a very important and extensive library of Mennonite History, perhaps the largest and richest in European source material in America, consisting of about 1800 volumes.

Beginning with 1890 he entered upon a career of writing, in the course of which he wrote many books and pamphlets, some of which are: "Geschichte der Mennoniten-Gemeinden"; "The Mennonites, Their History, Faith, and Practice" (two editions); "A Short History of Christianity"; "Menno Simons, His Life, Labors and Teachings"; "Infant Baptism, Its Origin among Protestants and Arguments Advanced for It"; "The Higher Criticism and The New Theology"; "Die Biblische Lehre von der Wehrlosigkeit"; "The Mennonite Church and Modernism"; "The Principle of Nonresistance as Held by the Mennonite Church" (two editions);

are available in state historical libraries. Our states have not kept accurate birth and death records until comparatively recent times, but state records are available for those working in recent history. The Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, has an alphabetical list of the obituaries printed in *The Herald of Truth*.

The federal census records filed in the Department of Commerce Building, Washington, D. C., contain a wealth of information for those investigating family history. The earlier records named only the heads of families and gave the number belonging to each family. Later records, however, give the names

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"Modern Religious Liberalism" (three editions); "The Destructiveness and Irrationality of the New Theology"; "The Failure of Modernism"; "Worldly Conformity in Dress" (two editions); "The Hutterian Brethren, A Story of Martyrdom and Loyalty"; "Symposium on War"; "The Background and Heritage of the Mennonite Church"; "War and the Christian Conscience" (two editions); "Is Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?" Besides these he wrote a great many articles in both English and German which have been historical and "in defense of the Faith," and which appeared in many and varied periodicals.

Brother Horsch was a member of the Historical Committee of General Conference from its establishment in 1911 until his death. He also served on the Church Polity Committee and the Advisory Hymns Committee of General Conference.

John Horsch's service was rich in two fields, Mennonite history, and theology. Both interests were strong and deep in his life and he gave himself with unrestrained devotion to them. He read widely and never wrote on a theme until he felt himself to be thoroughly informed on his subject. When he spoke he spoke with authority because he knew what he was talking about.

His historical writing was focused almost exclusively on European Mennonitism, particularly on the origins of the church in Switzerland and Holland. In this field he distinguished himself by his erudition and his sharp critical sense. It is probably not too much to say that no one exceeded him in mastery of the early history of Anabaptism. We owe much to his discovery of new sources and his correction of the errors of unfriendly historians.

In theology his chief service was in the field of polemic and apologetic studies. His work on "Modern Religious Liberalism" was outstanding and received wide recognition as a scholarly exposure of modernism. This book went through three editions and probably has had a wider circulation than any work of any sort by an American Mennonite author, reaching a sale of over ten thousand copies. He wrote incisively, and for some people, too sharply, but his very incisiveness and clear presentation of theological issues constituted his chief service. Above all he was a man of deep and sincere personal piety.

Personally, I owe much to John Horsch. Having married his only daughter (1923) I came to have frequent and intimate contact with him. By this association I was naturally led into a deep and lasting interest in Mennonite history. His critical acumen and wide erudition, as well as his deep devotion to the evangelical faith and the Mennonite Church were always and will continue to be an inspiration and challenge to me, as well as to many others who knew him personally and enjoyed his writings.



# NEWS & NOTES

Beyond the introduction of some English words it is doubtful if Palatine German, commonly called "Pennsylvania Dutch," has changed much during its two centuries in America. How accurately an unwritten dialect can be maintained in the midst of another language culture is illustrated in the case of Simon W. Sommer of Millersburg, Ohio. In 1934 he returned to Switzerland, whence his progenitor had come 115 years before, and found he was able to converse freely with the Swiss in their common dialect.

The John Horsch biography, written by H. S. Bender and published in this issue, also appeared in a shorter form in the *Gospel Herald*, issue of October 16, 1941.

The *Mennonite Quarterly Review* continues to publish valuable historical articles. The January, 1941, issue includes, for example, an article, "Amish Service Manuals," by John Umble; and one on "Spiritual Changes in European Mennonitism," by Robert Friedmann. This issue also concludes the "Palatinate Mennonite Census Lists, 1664-1774" by Harold S. Bender which had been running since January, 1940. In the April issue John Umble translates and edits "An Amish Minister's Manual"; C. C. Regier publishes an English translation of his mother's childhood reminiscences of Russia and the voyage to America; and Harold S. Bender presents an able paper on "Conrad Grebel as a Zwinglian, 1522-1523," continuing the biography which he began to publish in the *Review* in 1936. In the July issue Edward Yoder gives the first installment of a carefully-prepared article on "The Mennonites of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania"; and Robert Friedmann releases a chapter of his recently-completed monograph—as yet unpublished—on Mennonite devotional literature.

The *Christian Monitor* also contains articles of interest to Mennonite historians. The September, 1941, issue contains a paper, "How the Mennonite Church Began," written by Catherine Hernley. The November, 1941, number contains an article by S. C. Yoder, "Mennonite Institutions in South America," which is of value to those following current Mennonite life and work.

In the *New Holland* (Pa.) *Clarion*, issue of October 31, 1941, is found an article on the late John S. Wenger, blind mechanic and business man of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This article, written by M. G. Weaver, was earlier published in the booklet, *Overcoming Handicaps; The Ministry of Suffering*, Scottsdale, Pa.

A new book dealing with the history of the Mennonites, by C. Henry Smith,

## A BRIEF APPRECIATION

(Continued from page 1)

Mennonites and their opponents, as well as other official documents of first-rate value.

John Horsch believed that a worthy purpose in the study, investigation, and writing of the history of the Mennonite Church is that of learning the facts of this history and then presenting them in such a way as to indoctrinate the present and future generations with the historic principles of the faith and practice of the church. For him the real usefulness of the study of history was for edification and inspiration. It was his passion to inspire in the Mennonites of today a lasting loyalty to these historic principles of their church. There are no doubt other legitimate and worthy aims in the study and writing of history besides this one. Nevertheless Horsch's aim in writing on Mennonite history, to which he devoted himself so diligently, was a good and a praiseworthy one. Through his researches and his extensive writings he has made a lasting impression on the Mennonite Church in America. Numerous younger men have through him been inspired to take up the serious study of Mennonite history. His influence in this field will long live after him.

appeared in July of this year. Its title is: *The Story of the Mennonites*. The book is a revision and enlargement of the same author's earlier work, *The Mennonites*, published in 1920. This book includes the story of the Mennonites, of all the branches in all countries, from the earliest beginnings down to the most recent migrations and settlements.

*The National Geographic Magazine* for July, 1941, carried an extended article by Elmer C. Stauffer entitled, "In the Pennsylvania Dutch Country," accompanied by 20 illustrations and a map, together with 22 natural color photographs by Harrison H. Walker. Mennonites and Amish of Lancaster County, Pa., figure prominently in the article and the pictures.

Joseph W. Yoder of Huntingdon, Pa., published his book, *Rosanna of the Amish*, in October, 1940. To this date three printings totalling 10,000 copies have been issued. The same author has in the course of many years reduced to musical notation several hundred of the Amish hymn tunes, which so far as known had never been written down but had for centuries been handed down orally and by ear from one generation to another. He plans to publish all these tunes, if a sufficient demand will warrant the project. A small prospectus with four hymns has recently been issued by him.

The Historical Committee as elected by Mennonite General Conference in August, 1941, is as follows: H. S. Bender, H. A. (Continued on page 4)

## HISTORY RESEARCH

(Continued from page 2)

and ages of each member of the family, where they were born and how long they have been in the state in which they were then living. The agricultural censuses, in addition, give the kind and value of farm property owned by each farm family. State census records, too, are valuable and can usually be found in the archives of state historical buildings. It is possible to order from the Department of the Census, Washington, D. C., photostatic copies of the census record for stated years in the townships in which one is interested. Or for a much cheaper price one can have these pages photographed on microfilm, which can then be projected on a screen for leisurely and detailed study.

In the local communities there are often stored away in attics old letters, diaries, day books, secretary books or family Bibles. These often contain valuable bits of information which help the historian piece together his story. The owners of these records should be urged not to destroy any materials of this nature before a competent historian has had an opportunity to examine them.

The second problem has to do with the method of recording the information that has been discovered. A systematic plan of arranging and indexing the materials must be used, if they are to retain their meaning and value. It should be stressed that separate items of information should be placed on separate sheets or cards. Some prefer to use typewriter sheets; others prefer placing their notes on four by six inch cards. At the top of each card or sheet should be placed the subject of the information copied. This will make it possible to file the cards or sheets easily and to find particular items quickly.

When records are copied, they should be copied exactly as found. No attempt should be made to correct misspelled words or to punctuate more correctly than was done in the original. The copy should correspond exactly with the original. After a page of material has been copied, the writer should then go back and compare letter for letter, word for word, and sentence for sentence. After he has made sure that he has copied every statement absolutely the same way as it was in the original, he can then write "verified" at the bottom of his copy. In every case the card or sheet should also state where the material was found. If the record copied was from a land transfer book, the name, the number, and the page of the book, as well as the office in which the book is filed should be copied. If a statement is taken from an old county history, the exact name of the book and the date of publication as well as the name of the publisher and the library in which the book is found should be given. The one who follows these methods carefully will avoid many mistakes that might otherwise be made, and he and others can always recheck easily to establish the correctness of disputed points.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Ohio Mennonite Sunday Schools* by JOHN S. UMBLE, Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen, Indiana, 1941, Pages XV, 522. Illustrated. \$2.00.

An important contribution to regional Mennonite history has been made in John S. Umble's book on *Ohio Mennonite Sunday Schools*. The body of this work consists of three parts.

Part One is a general survey of the Sunday-school movement in Ohio. This survey traces the beginnings of the Sunday school in Ohio Mennonite churches, picturing the struggles which were incidental to this beginning. It describes, also, the beginning of the Young People's Bible Meeting and the local Sunday-school meetings which were the forerunners of the state Sunday-school conferences. Part Two describes in detail the Ohio Mennonite Sunday schools. It is a complete story of each Sunday school [of the (Old) Mennonite Church] which exists or has existed in the state. Part Three is the story of the Ohio Mennonite Sunday School Conference from its background and beginnings to the adoption of a constitution. One chapter describes the conference at work.

There is, also, a list of appendixes giving such details as dates and place of meeting of the state conference, lists of officers and committees, the constitution of the conference, a typical program, and a typical secretary's report. There is a list, also, of similar information for the local Sunday-school meetings. A very valuable feature of the book is a long list of illustrations—pictures of church buildings, of Sunday-school leaders, and executive committees. On the inside covers is produced a map of the state showing the location of each Mennonite community and the various Sunday schools.

This monograph is a mine of detailed information. One must marvel at the patient research which assembled all the names, facts, places, and events. Details are given in such abundance that the account hovers dangerously on the verge of triviality. It would seem to be of little importance, for instance, whether certain brethren moved into a community in the spring or the fall of a given year. The method of checking out library books would seem to be so insignificant and standardized as to scarcely need mentioning. Triviality is avoided, however, because of the significance of the total work. It takes thousands and thousands of details to make the history of a century in such a movement as the Sunday school of the Mennonite church. And scarcely any detail can be trivial which finds its place in the story.

The book professes to be a history of Ohio Mennonite Sunday schools, but it is more. It goes far toward being a history of Ohio Mennonite congregations.

Still more, it is something of a folk history of Ohio Mennonite people. A generation which has always traveled in automobiles will be interested in knowing what was considered correct technique in helping a lady out of a top buggy. Numerous specific instances preserve for us the folk thinking and the folk expressions which make history live.

There can be no question that I. W. Royer was right when he said, "We need someone to write a history of the Ohio Mennonite Sunday schools. One man in the state can do it if we can get him to undertake it." That man was John S. Umble. Every page of the book gives evidence that his was a work of love. He was writing a story of his people, of his state, of his Sunday-school conference, and no labor was spared to make it the best story possible.

This work is of significance not only in Ohio. It pictures, as has probably never been pictured before, the ending of one era in the Mennonite Church and the beginning of another. This transition from a German-speaking church, with practically no activities other than the fortnightly preaching service, to the aggressive English-speaking, evangelistic church which we know today, was a revolutionizing experience. Small wonder that there was much opposition and misunderstanding. The leaders who saw what had to be done and courageously set out on the task assume almost heroic proportions in this story. They brought about a change, not for the sake of a change, but for the good of the church, and in this story the lesson of history is plainly written that the prosperity and the effectiveness of the church is dependent upon a constant adaptation to current conditions and needs.

This book serves to set forth the unique character of the Ohio Sunday School Conference. As in no other district of the church, this conference has exercised autonomy. Its relation to the church conferences of the state was not hostile but merely nominal. In no other district of the church, therefore, has the Sunday-school movement been the actual leader in church improvement that it has been in Ohio.

The story of the Sunday school in a number of our districts needs to be written, but no one else will find the clearly marked field for such a story that John Umble found in Ohio. In our other districts the history must largely be a history of the conference and its constituent churches. To this history the Sunday-school story will be incidental. But, the spirit and the method of *Ohio Mennonite Sunday Schools* should inspire similar research in those sections of our church which do not yet have a regional history.

—Paul Erb.

## NEWS AND NOTES

(Continued from page 3)

Melvin Gingerich, Ira Landis, C. Z. Mast, J. B. Smith, M. M. Troyer, John C. Wenger. The committee has organized

itself as follows: Chairman, S. F. Coffman; Secretary, H. S. Bender; Treasurer, Edward Yoder (co-opted member).

*One Hundred Years Ago*, is the title of a 32-page booklet recently published by C. Henry Smith. It contains an address delivered by him at the first homecoming celebration of the Old Partridge Amish Mennonite congregation, near Metamora, Illinois, on August 20, 1940.

## Charter Members

The following persons became the charter members of the newly formed Mennonite Historical Association:

Ezra Beachy, Sherwood, Ohio; H. S. Bender, Goshen, Indiana; H. A. Brunk, R. 4, Harrisonburg, Va.; Ira J. Buckwalter, Intercourse, Pa.; J. C. Clemens, Lansdale, Pa.; S. F. Coffman, Vineland, Ontario; Ben Cutrell, Scottdale, Pa.; Eunice Deter, 627 W. Lincoln Way, Morrison, Ill.; Allen H. Erb, 710 Carson Ave., La Junta, Colo.; John E. Gingerich, R. 4, Elkhart, Indiana; Melvin Gingerich, North Newton, Kans.; C. L. Graber, Goshen, Indiana; H. Harold Hartzler, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; Henry Hernley, Scottdale, Pa.; G. F. Hersherberger, Goshen, Indiana; Lester T. Hershey, 931 Roosevelt Rd., Chicago, Illinois; Silas Hertzler, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; John Horsch, Scottdale, Pa.; John L. Horst, Scottdale, Pa.; Ira S. Johns, R. 4, Goshen, Indiana; Homer Kauffman, Scottdale, Pa.; Nelson Kauffman, 1417 Broadway, Hannibal, Mo.; Loren King, West Liberty, Ohio; J. M. Kreider, Palmyra, Mo.; Mrs. Leonard C. Kreider, North Newton, Kansas; C. J. Kurtz, Elverson, Pa.; Ira D. Landis, R. 3, Lititz, Pa.; C. Warren Long, 1101 Ann St., Peoria, Illinois; Noah H. Mack, Millersville, Pa.; Jesse B. Martin, 187 W. Erb St., Waterloo, Ontario, Canada; C. Z. Mast, Elverson, Pa.; A. J. Metzler, Scottdale, Pa.; L. C. Miller, Box 572, Manitou Springs, Colo.; Orie O. Miller, Akron, Pa.; John R. Mumaw, R. 4, Harrisonburg, Va.; John C. Paul, Scottdale, Pa.; Ruth Ressler, Scottdale, Pa.; I. W. Royer, Orrville, Ohio; Mary Royer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; Timothy Showalter, Broadway, Va.; C. Henry Smith, Bluffton, Ohio; J. B. Smith, Elida, Ohio; Willard H. Smith, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; George R. Smoker, Scottdale, Pa.; Isabelle Smucker, Cable, Ohio; Silas J. Smucker, 8 Whippany Road, Morristown, New Jersey; John E. Sommers, R. D., Louisville, Ohio; Mahlon A. Souder, Blooming Glen, Pa.; Amos K. Stauffer, 851 E. Orange St., Lancaster, Pa.; Grant M. Stoltzfus, Elverson, Pa.; Mrs. Sade Stutzman, Filer, Idaho; Maude Swartzendruber, Ninth & Carson Sts., La Junta, Colo.; Menno M. Troyer, Conway, Kansas; John Umble, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; Benj. G. Wenger, R. 3, Ephrata, Pa.; A. Martin Wenger, Telford, Pa.; John C. Wenger, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana; Samuel S. Wenger, 42 North Duke St., Lancaster, Pa.; C. F. Yake, Scottdale, Pa.; Edward Yoder, Scottdale, Pa.; Silvanus Yoder, Middlebury, Indiana; Ellrose D. Zook, Scottdale, Pa.